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ABSTRACT

This publication presents a brief summary description of an experimental dropout prevention program developed at McClymonds High School in Oakland, California. The program described is Project MACK (More Advanced Careers and Knowledge), a four-year program funded under ESEA Title VIII that operated from the 1971-72 school year through the 1974-75 school year. Project MACK was designed to identify the needs of potential dropouts and implement programs to meet those needs. The project was composed of four components, including 1) instructional services (utilizing a career cluster program), 2) student support services, 3) community services, and 4) management services. During the project's duration, the percentage of dropouts at McClymonds High School decreased from 16.1 percent to 6.2 percent, and the school's absentee rate was reduced by 14.1 percent. (JG)

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Dropout Prevention Programs in the Schools of California

A Report to the California Legislature
as Required by Education Code
Section 6499.57

EA 009 467

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION • Wilson Riles - Superintendent of Public Instruction • Sacramento, 1976

This legislative report was prepared by the Office of the Associate Superintendent for Secondary Education Programs (phone: 916-322-2553) from material furnished by the Oakland Unified School District, and the report was published by the California State Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814. Anyone who wants a copy of the complete report or who has questions regarding the project at McClymonds Senior High School should contact Willie Harper, Principal, McClymonds Senior High School, 2607 Myrtle Street, Oakland, CA 94607 (phone: 415-893-6569).

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1976

Education Code Chapter on the Dropout Prevention Act

CHAPTER 6.8. THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION ACT OF 1969

(Chapter 6.8, consisting of Sections 6499.51–6499.61, added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501)

Short Title

6499.51. This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the Elementary and Secondary School Dropout Prevention Act of 1969.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Legislative Intent

6499.52. It is the intention of the Legislature that programs be established to reduce the number of children who do not complete their elementary and secondary education. Such programs are to be designed to develop and demonstrate effective educational practices for the reduction and prevention of dropouts in urban and rural schools with high concentrations of children from low income families and with high dropout rates.

It is also the intention of the Legislature that all district, state, and federal programs related to dropout prevention be integrated and coordinated with the dropout prevention programs created by this chapter.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Definitions

6499.53. As used in this chapter:

(a) "Dropout" means a person who withdraws from school enrollment, or is excluded from school by suspension or expulsion before completing his elementary and secondary school education.

This definition also includes students at the elementary or secondary level who are under achieving and who can be identified as potential dropouts.

(b) "Program" means an Elementary and Secondary School Dropout Prevention Program established pursuant to this chapter.

(Amended by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1623.)

Applications

6499.54. Any school district may apply to establish a dropout prevention program. The application shall be submitted to the State Board of Education and shall contain a detailed plan which shall include all of the following:

(a) A description of the dropout prevention program proposed including the innovative methods system, materials, or programs and performance objectives to be utilized which show promise of reducing the numbers of elementary and secondary children who do not complete their education.

(b) A description of the procedures to be established to coordinate the development and operation of programs with other local, state, and federal dropout prevention programs and with other public and private programs having the same or a similar purpose.

(c) A description of the evaluative techniques and objective measures to be utilized by the applicant school district to determine the reduction in the numbers of children who drop out of, or are excluded from, educational programs prior to achieving a proficiency required for graduation from high school.

(d) A description of the proposed educational and administrative staffing of the program.

(e) A description of the steps taken in the development of the proposed program including involvement of potential participants and their families.

(f) Evidence that the district has examined its existing dropout prevention programs supported from local, state, and federal funds with the Elementary and Secondary School Dropout Prevention Programs authorized by this chapter, and evidence that the district intends to integrate such effective programs into the programs authorized by this chapter to increase its overall expenditure for dropout prevention programs.

(g) Descriptive data indicating the district's dropout rate for the three years preceding the application for both elementary and secondary schools.

(h) Dropout prevention programs below grade 12 shall be designed longitudinally so as to extend into higher grades.

(Amended by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1623.)

Priorities

6499.55. In approving applications for program approval pursuant to this chapter, the State Board of Education shall give priority to the acceptable applications from (1) districts with the highest concentrations of children from families with an annual income of four thousand dollars ($4,000) or less, and (2) districts which exceed the average statewide dropout rate.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Rules and Regulations; Waivers

6499.56. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this chapter.

The State Board of Education may grant waivers for any provision of the Education Code as may be necessary for the development of an effective dropout prevention program.

(Amended by Stats. 1970, Ch. 1623.)

Reports on Effectiveness of Programs

6499.57. School districts which have dropout prevention programs shall report to the State Board of Education the effectiveness of programs in reducing the number of school dropouts. The State Board of Education, on the basis of such reports, shall report annually to the Legislature on the success of the program and shall make recommendations to improve the program.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Distribution of Results of Programs

6499.58. Not later than 1972–73 fiscal year, the State Board of Education shall distribute a description of the results

achieved in the exemplary programs conducted. Comprehensive information regarding such exemplary programs shall be distributed to each school district of the state. The cost of preparing and distributing such information shall be financed from funds allowed under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Allocation of Funds

6499.59. The State Board of Education shall establish procedures for allocating funds to support the dropout prevention programs authorized by this chapter.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Administration of Program

6499.60. There is, within the Office of Compensatory Education, a unit of Elementary and Secondary School Dropout Prevention which shall administer the provisions of this chapter and all programs financed under the provisions of Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10, as amended).

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Approval of Allocation of Federal Funds by State Board of Education

6499.61. The State Board of Education shall approve the allocation of all funds annually received by the State of California under the provisions of Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10, as amended) for the purposes specified in this chapter.

(Added by Stats. 1969, Ch. 1501.)

Report of Dropout Prevention Programs Established Under the Dropout Prevention Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-10), Title VIII, as amended, authorized the use of federal funds for dropout prevention programs in urban and rural schools having high concentrations of children from low-income families and having high dropout rates. And under the ESEA provisions, the U.S. Office of Education authorized funds for ten, five-year dropout prevention programs for the nation beginning in the 1969 fiscal year; USOE authorized funds for an additional nine, four-year programs beginning in the 1971 fiscal year. However, no new programs have been approved during the past three years, and ESEA Title VIII has been merged into ESEA Title IV-C, Libraries and Learning Resources (P. L. 93-380).

Several California school districts applied for dropout prevention funds under ESEA Title VIII, but only one four-year program was approved by the U.S. Office of Education. The four-year program, called Project MACK (More Advanced Careers and Knowledge), was established at McClymonds Senior High School, Oakland Unified School District. The final report of the McClymonds' program, which terminated in June, 1975, has been summarized here for the readers.

Locale of the Program

Project MACK was located in Oakland, California, a city of about 346,000 with a diverse population. The racial-ethnic population of the city is approximately 47 percent, white; 35 percent, black; 10 percent, Spanish surname; 5 percent, other (Asian, Filipino, Hawaiian, and Eskimo); and 7 percent, native American. The school district presently enrolls about 56,000 students in its 65 elementary schools, 15 junior high schools, and six senior high schools.

MACK's target schools were McClymonds, one feeder junior high, and five elementary schools. The high school, located in west Oakland, has an enrollment of about 1,149 students, and 99 percent of these students are black. More than 77 percent of the student population served by the project come from families enrolled in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Need for the Program

The need for the program was identified by the district superintendent and the members of the Oakland Board of Education. Achievement test results reported by the research department of the Oakland Unified School District indicated that achievement at McClymonds Senior High School was significantly below city, state, and national norms. The school district's attendance office reported that McClymonds had the highest rate of unexcused absences and greatest pupil mobility of any high school of the district. The dropout rate of McClymonds was higher than any other high school in Oakland prior to the implementation of Project MACK.

Description of the Program

Project MACK's major goal was to provide a comprehensive school program which would reduce the dropout rate, improve student achievement, reduce absenteeism and class cutting, and improve student attitudes toward school. To provide an integrated program for the total student population at McClymonds Senior High School, the project was composed of these four components: (1) instruction, with a career cluster program which focused on work experience and classroom occupational orientation, language arts, social studies, reading and math workshops, inservice training, and instructional media center; (2) student support services, which provided guidance and counseling, special psychological services, a health program, student activities program, and inservice training; (3) community services, which was designed to utilize community resources in reducing the dropout rate; and (4) management, which provided for overall coordination of the project.

The conceptual framework of Project MACK was based on the assumption that the causal factors leading to the students' failure to complete their high school education are various, and that any project that has as its goal to reduce significantly the number of students withdrawing from school prematurely must attend to those factors. Three causal factors were identifed in the Oakland project:

1. The inability of the student to cope with the academic, social, and/or economic demands of the school.

   In order for the students to be successful in school, they must possess the basic skills of reading and mathematics. The student must perceive the school as a source of personal growth and of preparation for future goals.

2. The failure of the educational institution to direct itself to the specific needs of its student population.

   The educational institution must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses and goals that the students bring to it. It is upon this foundation that the school program should be developed. The educational institution in the past has too often attempted to mold the student to the goals of the institution, with little or no attention given to the needs that the student has.

3. The impinging upon a student of economic, social, family, or physical pressures that derive from situations outside the school environment.

   Students do not enter the school as a "tabula rasa," independent entities unmarked by their environment. They bring a host of attitudes and goals. They may come with health deficiencies that prevent them from taking part in the total school program. They may come with health deficiencies that prevent them from taking part in the total school program. They may bring family concerns or problems that inhibit adequate concentration on academic matters.

Project MACK was designed to identify the needs of each student. Once identified, programs were to be developed and implemented that would satisfy those needs. Thus, in the process of completing school, the student would gain skills, understandings, and a positive self-esteem.

The federal grant to the school district for Project MACK was $610,716 in 1974-75.

Summary of Program Accomplishments

Project MACK (More Advanced Careers and Knowledge) was implemented at McClymonds High School during the 1971-72 school year, and it completed its fourth and final year of operation in June of 1975. The project was highly successful in meeting its objective of decreasing the overall absentee rate and in reducing the percent of dropouts from 16.1 percent to a low of 6.2 percent. There was a dramatic reduction of the class cutting rate of McClymonds Senior High School from 23.0 percent in 1970 to 7.2 percent at the end of the 1974-75 school year. The absentee rate of the school was also reduced by 14.1 percent.

Reading and mathematics achievement test scores of students who enrolled in MACK's reading and math programs showed significant gains. Target ninth graders made ten months gain in reading achievement. Tenth graders in the math program also recorded 11 months gain in mathematics. Target students in the Monterey Reading Program made the highest gains in reading: 2 years 4 months and 2 years 8 months in reading accuracy and comprehension, respectively. The results of twelfth grade achievement tests administered by the school district showed that the mean grade equivalent of McClymonds' twelfth graders in reading, which was 7.9 in 1973, was raised to 10.0. Results of the annual achievement tests also documented growth in math test scores of McClymonds' twelfth graders. The mean grade equivalent of the twelfth graders in math was 7.7 in 1973 while the class of 1975 recorded a relatively high mean grade equivalent of 9.8 in math.

The results of annual surveys designed to measure the attitudes and feelings of students and parents toward McClymonds' programs showed that the majority of the students and parents had developed positive feelings toward the school's programs. The majority of the students, approximately 60 percent, surveyed during the past three years indicated that they were satisfied with the course offerings at McClymonds High School. Data on student satisfaction prior to the implementation of Project MACK showed that only 43.9 percent of the students surveyed indicated satisfaction with the course offerings. Not only were the students satisfied with what McClymonds now offers, but a large majority of them felt that McClymonds was getting "better" or "somewhat better" as a high school. Coupled with this belief was a growing positive feeling among many students toward their teachers. For example, about three-fourths of McClymonds High School students indicated that most of their teachers were fair to students.

A summary of Project MACK accomplishments at McClymonds Senior High School is presented in the accompanying chart.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT MACK ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Project objective	Magnitude of problem before Project MACK	Level of problem after Project MACK	Accomplishment
Decrease the dropout rate by 15 percent, as compared to 1970 baseline.	The 1970 baseline dropout rate was 16.5 percent.	The dropout rate in 1975 was 6.2 percent.	62.4 percent reduction of the baseline rate.
Decrease absentee rate by 25 percent, as compared to 1970 baseline.	The 1970 baseline absentee rate was 19.2 percent.	The 1975 absentee rate was 16.5 percent.	14.1 percent reduction of baseline absentee rate.
Decrease class cutting rate by 15 percent, as compared to 1970 baseline.	The 1970 baseline class cutting rate was 23.0 percent.	The 1975 class cutting rate was 7.2 percent.	68.7 percent reduction of the 1970 baseline rate.
Increase student achievement in reading and mathematics.	The mean grade equivalent* of 1973 twelfth graders in reading and math was 7.1 percent and 7.7 percent, respectively.	The mean grade equivalent of 1975 seniors in reading and math was 10.0 percent and 9.8 percent, respectively.	The academic status of the school as measured by the performance of each year's twelfth graders has improved immensely.
Increase student satisfaction with educational programs at the school.	43.9 percent of McClymonds' students indicated satisfaction with the school's program in 1971.	61.0 percent of the students indicated satisfaction with the school's program in 1975.	17.1 percent increase.

*The 1973 mean GE of the twelfth graders was computed from the results of CTBS.

Conclusions and Observations

In spite of some typical problems that beset dropout prevention projects--inadequate definitions and concepts of "dropout"--the McClymonds dropout prevention project has produced some useful common indices of dropouts. It has increased our understanding of conditions under which the dropout phenomenon tends to occur. Recognizing that each dropout may have characteristics that must be considered in meeting the needs of that individual, the Project MACK personnel have identified the "typical" dropout in this way:

> On the whole a typical dropout is "overage," reads two or more years below average grade level, has not achieved according to his or her presumed potential, and is academically in the lower quarter of the class. More likely, a typical dropout was held back at least once in the elementary or junior high school years or has reached high school through social promotion. While he or she may not have come in conflict with the law, this person has received many school referrals or suspensions. He or she participates very seldom in school activities, even in extra-curricular activities. He or she tends to show signs of alienation and feelings of rejection by the school and his or her peers. A typical dropout tends to be passive and commands little respect from teachers because of his or her academic and disciplinary failures. Our data on the dropout indicate that students left McClymonds High School because of the following reasons: (1) lack of interest; (2) financial and home problems; (3) pregnancy; and (4) conflicts with the school or problems with the law.

The personnel in Oakland also made two recommendations as a result of their involvement in Project MACK:

1. It is our observation that too often much attention is focused on "innovative" programs and/or instructional procedures in an effort to meet project objectives. The result of the over-emphasis on programs is that not much attention is paid to the organizational features of the school that support or impede planned innovations. Fundamental changes in a school's organization should receive adequate emphasis and attention just as the development of new programs to meet project objectives. Specifically, it is our belief that necessary changes in organizational structure--the roles, relationships, procedures that govern participants' expectations, etc.--should precede or at least accompany attempts at implementing innovative projects such as an ESEA Title VIII project in the schools.

2. In addition to changes in the structure of the school organization, there should be well designed inservice programs to help develop the organizational skills of the project staff and the faculty members of the school. Lack of skills in communication, group problem solving, and organizational leadership on the part of the project staff hampers collaborations among the faculty, project staff, and the administration. Efforts should be made in the initial phases of the project to effect alterations in the "old ways" teachers and administrators see and work with each other, and help prepare the school staff to collaborate and work

as teams. In order to create productive and cohesive staff teams, the school should establish procedures to facilitate frequent communication among faculty and project staff and high participation in group decision making.